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ABSTRACT

This newsletter includes six articles related to the Regional Resource and Federal Centers for Special Education Network and its efforts in the area of standards and accountability. In "Teacher Training and Skills: Necessary Ingredients for Standards and Accountability," John Copenhaver discusses ways in which the Regional Resource and Federal Center Network can assist states with standards and accountability. Next, "How Are You Doing?" by Jim Ysseldyke and Ron Erickson discusses the work of the National Center on Educational Outcomes in developing a conceptual model of educational outcomes and related indicators. Eileen Ahearn of the National Association of State Directors of Special Education offers "NASDSE Wingspread Conference Builds on Accountability Model," in which she reviews a meeting of stakeholders representative of the disability community which looked at the individual student component of a balanced system of accountability. Ten prioritized recommendations are suggested for changes in the Individualized Education Program process. Ed Roeber of the Council of Chief State School Officers writes about the collaborative effort to help states develop student standards and assessments in "CCSSO Develops Interstate Assessment Collaborative Effort." Margie Crutchfield of the Council for Exceptional Children presents standards for education and preparation of special education teachers developed by the CEC in "CEC Establishes Standards for Accreditation and Certification." Finally, Ken Olsen of the Mid-South Regional Resource Center reviews collaborative efforts to produce resource materials on standards and alternative assessments in "MSRRC: Recent Activities Related to Standards and Assessment." (DB)

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Winter 1997

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Adopting standards and measuring accountability in public education

The Winter 1997 Regional Resource and Federal Centers (RRFC) Network Links Newsletter is devoted to the topic of standards and accountability in education.

Guest Editor, Dr. John Copenhaver, Director of the Mountain Plains Regional Resource Center (MPRRC), gives a regional perspective on standards and assessment. His editorial, "Teacher Training and skills: necessary ingredients for standards and accountability," discusses ways in which the Regional Resource and Federal Center Network can continue to assist states with standards and accountability.

Dr. Eileen Ahearn, of the National Association of State Directors of Special Education (NASDSE), introduces the NASDSE Wingspread Conference, a meeting of stakeholders convened to look at the individual student component of the balanced system of accountability. Her article lists ten prioritized recommendations for changes in the Individualized Education Program (IEP) process.

Dr. Ed Roeber, Director of Student Assessment Programs at the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO), writes about The State Collaborative on Assessment and Student Standards project, an interstate assessment collaborative effort started in 1991 by the National Center for Educational Outcomes, CCSSO, and the National Association of State Directors of Special Education.

Dr. Jim Ysseldyke and Dr. Ron Erickson of the National Center on Educational Outcomes (NCEO) write about NCEO's work in developing a conceptual model of educational outcomes, and indicators to monitor outcomes. NCEO is a collaborative effort of the University of Minnesota, the National Association of State Directors of Special Education, and the Council of Chief State School Officers.

Margie Crutchfield, of the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC), presents standards for education and preparation of special education teachers developed by CEC.

Dr. Ken Olsen, Director of the Mid-South Regional Resource Center (MSRRC), discusses recent collaborative efforts to produce resource materials on standards and alternative assessments.

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Teacher training and skills: necessary ingredients for standards and accountability

John Copenhaver, Director
Mountain Plains Regional
Resource Center
Guest Editor

The standards movement is not new in the United States. We expect high standards when a new house is being built or during the construction of public buildings, dams, and bridges. Poor workmanship or low standards put lives at risk. We have standards for the water we drink, the food we eat and the air we breathe. Standards protect us and improve the quality of life. Children, our nation's most valuable resource, require standards and outcomes for their education. Thus, the development and implementation of high educational standards are of critical importance for ournation's future to be secure.

In order for positive change to occur, we need to couple high standards with development of teacher skills and competencies at the classroom level.

Nature survives because of the application of standards. The beaver must fashion the construction of its dam in a certain way to effectively hold back the water and provide shelter and food for itself. The spider weaves its web to effectively hold prey and withstand the elements.

Standards in nature apply to all; educational standards should be no different. All students, including those with disabilities, should have attainable standards and be accountable to fulfill those expectations. Special educators need to continue their active participation in the standards movement. "If state curriculum standards are really going to apply to all students, states will need to tap special educators' expertise in how to teach the curriculum embedded in the standards to students with diverse learning styles, including a range of students with special needs. Consequently, it would be beneficial for special educators to actively participate in both the development and the implementation of curriculum standards and frameworks" (Standards-Based School Reform, 1996).

An approach to standards development originating at the top is destined for failure. Goals 2000 is a national effort that uses standards as the centerpiece to improve education. Standards are being formulated for the certification of teachers, for the content of curricula, and for the outcomes of teaching. Virtually every subject in education has formulated or is in the process of formulating or revising national standards that describe what students should know and be able to do (Eisner, 1995). But the development of national and state policies or standards will do little to improve the education for the typical student. The "top down" approach to school reform and standards development will gain a lot of attention, but in the long run it will probably result in no significant difference. Reflecting on fifteen years of policy education, McLaughlin (1990) concluded that "change continues to be a problem of the smallest unit." Recent emphasis on restructuring and school-site decision making reflect this focus on the school level and demonstrate a broad consensus that much educational change can only be created and sustained at the school level (Barth, 1990).

In order for positive change to occur, we need to couple high standards with development of teacher skills and competencies at the classroom level. All the high standards in the world will not improve education unless there are teachers who accept those standards, beleive the standards can be met, and have the skills to effectively teach to those standards. Standards should be designed to guide, not limit.

The educator is the key player in the standards movement. Good teachers are the catalyst for positive academic results. Teachers who receive their training at institutions of higher education that train teachers to use validated instructional and behavioral methodolo-

(see High standards, page 3)

High standards, teacher skills necessary for change

gies are more likely to achieve high standards for students.

> The educational decision makers of America, over the centuries, have spent their time and energies — wasted their time and energies — looking in all the wrong places for the answers to education's most compelling and perplexing problems. Rather than looking for answers to find where the problems are, that is, in the classroom where education takes place, they have been looking elsewhere. In fact, they have been looking almost everywhere else. With what effect? Nothing of substance has changed. That is, the process of teaching children has not changed nor improved systemically in any measurable way. This is a centuries-old dilemma with which education has just never come to grips. In 1632, John Amos Comenius, the father of modern day group instruction, noted in his book The Great Didactic, 'For more than a hundred years much complaint has been made of the unmethodological way in which schools are conducted but it is only within the last thirty that any serious attempt has been made to find a remedy for this state of things. And with what results? Schools remain exactly as they were.' In 1993, Dr. David Brite, President of the Children's Television Network, noted, 'Schools today are one of the few places in our society that our grandparents would easily recognize' (Brite, 1993). Modern day educational researchers have come to the same conclusion, noting that, 'Teaching patterns [have remained] unchanged over the past century (Needels and Gage, 1991)' (Latham, 1996).

What I am advocating is that we not put the cart before the horse. Standards are essential, but before any local, state or national standards movement can be successful we need to ensure that teacher training programs provide a relevant experience that promotes a seamless transition from the university to the classroom, that makes sure each teacher possesses skills that create a positive learning environment, and that all children learn to their greatest ability. Many teachers comment that their "teacher education" really began with their professional career, using trial and error to learn and solve difficult problems. Standards, like lesson plans, need to be adjusted and modified according to the students learning style and abilities.

The educator is the key player in the standards movement. Good teachers are the catalyst for positive academic results.

The following is an experience I had at the junior high level that taught me a lesson about standards for all. One day in September, I was looking down from my classroom onto the P.E. track. The P.E. instructor had his class lined up ready to run the oval. He instructed the students to try their best. He signaled the class to begin, and as they rounded the track the pack began to separate. A small group formed up front, a large group in the middle, and a small group trailed behind the others. As they crossed the finish line, they finished in that sequence. Later that day, I asked the teacher how he applied the curriculum standards to such a diverse group of individuals. He commented, "By March, each student will cross the finish line in unison." He smiled and bet me lunch that it could be done.

When March arrived, he asked me to look down upon the track, for today his kids would all cross the finish line together. The teacher began to position the students at various spots along the track. Some were placed as far as halfway around the oval. The teacher signaled the students to begin, all trying to their maximum physical ability. As they approached the end of the race the group crossed the finish line almost in unison. This teacher had the key to standards and accountability. He had the necessary teaching skills, coupled with high standards for all students. He knew how to modify instruction to accommodate for learning styles and individual abilities. The standards for his class described both what the

(see Teacher training, page 4)

Teacher training programs must provide seamless transition from university to classroom

students should know (content) and be able to do and how well they must know and do it (performance). Teacher skills plus standards/accountability, and a teacher's belief in the value of these standards will ensure implementation of the standards behind the classroom doors.

A mechanism to ensure the accomplishment of standards is each state's Comprehensive System of Personnel Development (CSPD) involving all stakeholders, including general education and institutions of higher education. CSPD can be a driving force. States such as Utah, Iowa, and Montana have used CSPD to help increase collaboration with all stakeholders and ensure a skilled teaching force. Montana has created a system of regional CSPD Councils that has influenced the implementation of research validated practices at the classroom level. Iowa, through the Area Education Agencies, has developed an effective state technical assistance support system that reaches teachers and other professional staff. Utah has developed a state technical assistance center, the Utah Learning Resource Center, that provides necessary inservice and technical assistance to all school districts. Utah has also engaged in developing a special education strategic plan that is a driving force in the state. The plan was developed by a large group of stakeholders who were able to reach consensus on a mission and goals/objectives for special education. This is really an action plan that pushes standards and accountability for educators, administrators, and all students with disabilities.

I asked the teacher how he applied the curriculum standards to such a diverse group of individuals.

The Regional Resource and Federal Center Network will continue to be a key player in assisting states in the area of standards and accountability by actively participating in national and state reform efforts. The RRFC Network involvement with CSPD, state strategic planning, and state improvement plans will assist in building the capacity of each state education agency to deliver appropriate standards and an accountability system for all students, including those with disabilities.

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How are you doing?

Jim Ysseldyke, Ph.D.
and Ron Erickson, Ph.D.
The National Center on
Educational Outcomes (NCEO)

The average American would be hard pressed to tell you just how many times he or she has used that phrase to begin a friendly conversation. But no matter how trite, the question "How are we doing?" becomes very significant when focused on our nation's efforts at educating students with disabilities. In fact, it was this very question that led to the creation of a national center focused on assessing the results of education for students receiving special education and related services.

The question "How are we doing?" becomes very significant when focused on our nation's efforts at educating students with disabilities.

The National Center on Educational Outcomes (NCEO), established in 1990 and supported under new funding in 1995, is the only national center focusing its activities on educational outcomes for all students, including students with disabilities. NCEO is a collaborative effort of the University of Minnesota, the National Association of State Directors of Special Education (NASDSE), and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO).

In working toward the fulfillment of its mission to provide leadership in developing a conceptual model of educational outcomes, and indicators to monitor those outcomes, NCEO first began its work in collaboration with the general education system by convening broad stakeholder groups to develop models of educational results that were deemed appropriate for all students.

These early efforts in identifying broadly-recognized outcomes for students with and students without disabilities led Center researchers to examine the extent to which students with disabilities were actively participating in state and national educational assessment efforts. Without their full and active participation in large-scale assessment programs, the question "How are they doing?" could never be adequately answered. Unfortunately, the results of these early investigations were disheartening. Whether examining state-level testing programs or the nation's "report card," students with disabilities — at alarming rates — were being steered away from participation. Even when included, little was understood about their educational progress as a whole, since testing administrators and policymakers were not able to dis-aggregate the data being collected.

After finding that students with disabilities have been inappropriately excluded from national and state data collection programs, NCEO began exploring ways in which students with disabilities could be included in these assessment systems. NCEO has worked with standards-setting groups and with states in developing their educational standards, to explore ways in which these apply to students with disabilities and ways in which they might be modified to be appropriate for all students.

Other unique challenges are faced by states when establishing assessment programs aligned to their new standards. Questions surface about how states can best encourage the participation of special education students, and about how they can best report on their progress. NCEO has worked with the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) on the inclusion of students with disabilities in the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), and with numerous states in their attempts to increase the participation of students with disabilities in their statewide assessment programs.

One Mission, Three Lines of Work

Shortly after receiving its second five-year cycle of funding from the U.S. Office of Special Education Programs

(see NCEO works, page 6)

NCEO works with standards-setting groups, states to develop education standards

(OSEP), NCEO staff conducted strategic planning sessions to identify salient issues facing students with disabilities in this era of rapidly expanding efforts in educational reform and accountability. Based on research and findings from the first five years, fourteen different issues were identified as being particularly challenging (see "Issues for Students with Disabilities in National and State-level Educational Reform," below). Core staff established three major strands of activities to pursue in addressing and overcoming these issues:

1. Documentation and Analysis

NCEO currently maintains an extensive resource library featuring literature on issues surrounding educational outcomes, standards-setting activities, assessment programs, and educational accountability systems. Articles, reports, monographs, and other documents have been gathered through an expansive network of contacts with state and national organizations and agencies. Many of these documents are produced by state government agencies or private organizations, and cannot be accessed through typical searches. This current library is electronically cataloged on the Center's ORBIT system (Outcome-Related Base of Information Text).

NCEO staff have conducted strategic planning sessions to identify salient issues facing students with disabilities.

NCEO augments this database with new information gathered through its biennial national survey of state special education directors and assessment officials. The Center also focuses on the secondary analysis of existing documentation, such as state standards or assessment policies, to determine the extent to which students with disabilities have been considered in their development. NCEO staff regularly synthesize information across states and produce timely reports of their findings.

2. Information Exchange and Dissemination

The information derived through the above activities needs to be placed in the hands of individual policymakers and educational officials in order to become truly effective. Therefore, NCEO places considerable attention on networking and linking with dozens of other organizations and agencies involved with state or national reform efforts, and on producing practical printed materials through its publications office. NCEO produces several different types of publications, including synthesis reports that summarize complex issues for policymaking audiences; technical reports that offer more in-depth coverage of issues; policy briefs that offer easy-to-read overviews for a quick grasp of important issues; and assessment series reports, comprehensive examinations of different state efforts at including students with disabilities in standard-setting activities, assessment programs, or overall accountability systems.

NCEO also facilitates networking among the dozen reform-related research projects currently being funded by the U.S. Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI) or the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) through meetings and the monthly newsletter, Datalinks. NCEO will place a special emphasis on disseminating information about the impact of testing accommodations on score interpretation, a pressing need for many states.

3. Technical Assistance

NCEO offers a menu of responses to state-level requests for technical assistance. Responses may range from distributing printed materials, to on-site consultations or presentations provided by Center staff or one of its many national affiliates, individuals selected for their particular expertise in various areas related to educational reform. NCEO also seeks to connect states to other education-based technical assistance providers, such as the Regional Resource Centers, the Regional Education Laboratories, and the Comprehensive Regional Assistance Centers. Through its work with

(see How are we doing, page 7)

How are we doing in our efforts to help all students reach higher standards?

NASDSE and CCSSO, the Center helps sponsor a State Collaborative on Assessment and Student Standards, a twenty member consortium of states and educational organizations focused on the issues of students with disabilities in statewide assessment programs.

Still Too Early To Tell

How are we doing in our efforts to help all students reach higher standards? Unfortunately it's too early to tell. Even those states with the most inclusive assessment programs are just beginning to examine the answer to that question. But the National Center on Educational Outcomes hopes that, through the efforts of its faculty, staff and broad network of collaborators, the answer won't be too far off.

NCEO places considerable attention on networking and linking with dozens of other organizations and agencies involved with state or national reform efforts.

Notable Facts

♦ Federal agencies that collect data on the results of education do not consistently consider students with disabilities in their data collection efforts.

♦ Systems change efforts are inherently complex and political, involving multiple points of potential influence.

♦ Parents of children with disabilities, as a major force of influence, do not have enough information on current educational reform efforts.

♦ The Individualized Education Program (IEP), as currently implemented, is not aligned with standards-based reform.

♦ States are working to align their curriculum and assessment frameworks with performance standards, with little consideration for students with disabilities.

♦ States are not consistent in their reporting of participation rates for students with disabilities in statewide assessments.

♦ There is a lack of research information on large-scale assessment for students with disabilities.

♦ State efforts in educational reform are always in a state of flux, making it challenging to always know if and how students with disabilities are being considered.

♦ State education agencies (including both general and special education) do not have the capacity to address all the issues that need to be addressed during educational reform.

♦ Other technical assistance providers already are providing assistance to states facing standards-based reform; NCEO must coordinate its technical assistance efforts with these other providers.

♦ The participation of students with disabilities in assessments and accountability systems should be kept "on the radar screen" as reform efforts progress in states.

♦ Many state level special education personnel are not currently "at the table" of reform efforts in their states.

♦ The reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) has implications for the direction of state and district special education efforts.

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NASDSE Wingspread Conference builds on accountability model

Eileen Ahearn, Ph.D., National Association of State Directors of Special Education (NASDSE)

In 1995, NASDSE published *NASDSE's Vision for a Balanced System of Accountability,* which presented a system of accountability that included input/process accountability, system accountability, and individual student accountability. This framework puts forth a conceptual basis for looking beyond process monitoring and addressing quality based on results — system results and individual student results.

NASDSE's Vision for a Balanced System of Accountability focuses on system results and individual student results.

In October 1996, NASDSE convened a group of stakeholders representative of the disability community at the Johnson Foundation's Wingspread Conference Center in Racine, Wisconsin, to look at the individual student component of the balanced system of accountability. The Wingspread Conference, *Accountability in Special Education: Enhancing Student Accountability*, focused specifically on making the IEP a more useful process for instruction and for measuring accountability. National leaders in the disability field have referred to the individualized education program (IEP) as the "heart" of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Continuing the work begun with the *Vision for a Balanced System of Accountability*, NASDSE is focusing its attention first on the IEP and the role it plays in the individual student performance component of a balanced system of accountability. A Project FORUM document, *The IEP: Benefits, Challenges and Future Directions,* has provided background on the origins of the IEP, reviewed research conducted on the IEP, and posed questions and considerations for future directions of the IEP.

Over the two days, discussion covered many aspects of the IEP as a document and process. The following are some highlights from the report entitled *Enhancing Individual Student Accountability Through the IEP:*

Statements reflecting the *beneficial systemic aspects* included the following:

♦ At its best, the IEP can enable the celebration of diversity.

♦ The IEP creates the context and purpose for the inputs and processes required in special education.

♦ A well-planned IEP facilitates better systemic planning because it includes a consideration of how the needed services fit into the overall district plan.

♦ With appropriate participation by general education staff, the IEP can assure that the system takes ownership for all students, changing the labeling of students from "yours" and "mine" to "ours."

♦ The IEP can personalize education by motivating the system to face the need for accommodations to assure that all students with diverse learning needs have an equal opportunity to achieve comparable results.

♦ With the implementation of recent amendments concerning transition, the IEP is an important tool in focusing attention on a child's becoming part of the community through its focus on adult, post-secondary outcomes.

Negative systemic aspects were also mentioned, especially the financial demands and constraints faced by school districts, and the negative attitudes sometimes seen in the non-disabled community toward expenditures for special education. Problems related to the lack of consistency in coordination between special and general education, especially in curricular matters, were emphasized as significant barriers to providing equal opportunity for academic achievement for all students. It was noted that the stress and demands of working with students with disabilities are driving teachers out of the profession, exag-

(see Conference participants, page 9)

Conference participants discuss IEP as a document and a process

gerating the problems of recruiting and retaining an appropriate staff.

The potential of the IEP process and document for positive beneficial systemic effects were seen as far more significant than the detrimental aspects. A growing trend toward the use of individual learning plans for all students — a part of many educational reform efforts — was cited. The IEP approach, as it has evolved over the past twenty years, could be an effective model for developing individualized educational plans for all students. It was also noted that more formalized long-term planning, such as that involved in writing a program for yearly instruction, can be much less time consuming and more effective in the long run than the usual weekly lesson plans.

To meet the Conference goal of developing a prioritized set of recommendations for the use of the IEP in instruction and in measuring accountability, participants were asked to rank thirty-one items based on two criteria: 1) likelihood of implementation, and 2) potential for positive impact. A scale of one to four was used, with four indicating the highest ranking. The final list was entered into a worksheet and participants ranked each item on the two factors.

The conference plan called for identification of the ten highest priorities through the ranking procedure. However, analysis of the ranking results revealed a significant finding: participants clearly supported almost all of the recommendations as having a *very high potential for positive effects*, but the scores were *very low on the likelihood of implementation* for those recommendations. The unanticipated significant finding on the lack of confidence in achieving improvements was discussed at the beginning of the final session to try to uncover the factors that might be involved in the perception of "blocked implementability."

There was consensus among participants that there were certain overriding conditions causing the apparent disconnection between the potential for improvement and the probability of realization. The current accountability system for special education was described as contributing to the problem, specifically federal regulations and monitoring in special education. Monitoring in special education was characterized as a paper process that does not address quality issues. Since receipt of funding is attached to compliance with required procedures as evidenced by paper documentation, there is no confidence that this situation will change. The type of effective monitoring that is needed is difficult to do, and requires more time and a higher degree of trust.

The continued low levels of trust between families and schools was also discussed as contributing to the lack of hope for implementation of improvements. It was emphasized that parents have been educated about their rights, but not on how to participate effectively in the IEP process.

Demonstrating to parents that their children are making progress would help build needed trust and lead to a decrease of attention to litigious compliance details. Attitudes are the foundation of the lack of trust and they are the most difficult to change. To make these changes will require a "social marketing" approach.

The IEP approach, as it has evolved over the past twenty years, could be an effective model for developing individulaized educational plans for all students.

Emphasis was also placed on the evolution of the IEP into a legal document that has lost its meaning to instruction. It was described as part of the "cloud of litigation" that overshadows all of special education. Procedures are developed because of legal implications that many times are not what teachers would choose to serve the best interests of the student. One reason offered for this dilemma was parents' continued discomfort with the process and its outcomes, fearing for the future of their children in an

(see Conference results, page 10)

Conference results in ten prioritized recommendations for the IEP process

economy that has eliminated many of the types of jobs that used to be available for students with disabilities.

The ten recommendations that ranked highest on both factors — likelihood of implementation and potential for positive impact — were selected as the highest prioritizations for action.

Prioritized Recommendations

♦ Create a clear, common-sense, user-friendly tool that uses a common language and is written in holistic terms.

♦ Describe in the IEP the accommodations, including supplemental aids and services, to be used in general and special education that will be made available to permit successful education of the student.

♦ Identify the needs, strategies, and measures associated with providing access to the general education curriculum.

♦ Make the IEP process more user-friendly, by saving time, reflecting cultural appropriateness, and respecting stakeholder needs.

♦ Focus the IEP on various transition points to ensure continuity of learning.

♦ Determine annually how the child will participate in the accountability program (regular assessment with accommodations, or alternate assessment).

♦ Develop broad-based goals based on the vision for each child so the IEP communicates expectations that can be measured periodically.

There is a critical need to shift from the existing procedural evaluation and monitoring approach, to an accountability system that emphasizes the quality of teaching and learning for students with disabilities.

♦ Clearly specify the role of the general education teacher in the IEP process for each child.

♦ Address behavior management issues in the IEP process, using behavior specialists, teacher training, interventions, and other supports.

♦ Articulate in the IEP the link between what we know about the student, what we propose to do to help, and how we will know if we have been successful.

The IEP is not a stand-alone or quantifiable accountability measure for special education. However, it is a vital element and successful implementation of the recommendations developed at this conference will assist in the development of the individual student component of an accountabiilty system. Participants in the conference agreed to work toward the adoption of the recommendations produced at the conference. NASDSE will document and broadly disseminate the findings with the assistance of other associations and organizations.

In the interest of providing the thoughtful leadership that NASDSE committed to in its publication, *Leading and Managing*, NASDSE has begun planning for two additional conferences to address the other two components of the Balanced System of Accountability — accountability for system standards, and accountability for inputs and processes.

The Wingspread Conference concluded that there is a *critical need to shift from the existing procedural evaluation and monitoring approach, to an accountability system that emphasizes the quality of teaching and learning for students with disabilities*. This shift will necessarily involve a change in focus at all levels to meet the public's need for evidence of student achievement.

Only by measuring results and demonstrating progress can we build the confidence of parents and strengthen public support for special education services. Implementation of an effective and complete accountability system, as illustrated in the three-pronged approach of the Balanced System of Accountability, is essential for this to happen.

CCSSO develops interstate assessment collaborative effort

Ed Roeber, Ph.D.
Director of Student Assessment Programs
Council of Chief State
School Officers

The Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) represents the 57 states and territories. It conducts activities through the member states that enhance the quality of education at state and local levels. In 1991, CCSSO started an interstate assessment collaborative effort, the State Collaborative on Assessment and Student Standards (SCASS).

The SCASS is designed to help states develop student standards and assessments. SCASS improves the quality of the student assessments that states develop and use, speeds the time that it takes for innovations in assessment to be adopted on a wide scale, and reduces the costs required to develop these assessments.

SCASS improves the quality of the student assessments that states develop and use, speeds the time that it takes for innovations in assessment to be adopted on a wide scale, and reduces the costs required to develop these assessments.

Two types of activity are taking place. The first is the formation of assessment consortia in which state curriculum and assessment specialists, content experts, and others develop state consensus frameworks and prototype exercises in various content areas. Assessment consortia may develop procedures for states to use within their large-scale assessment programs. Assessment consortia have been established in the following areas:

♦ Arts Education Assessment Consortium: This group is pilot-testing a series of arts performance assessments that will measure various areas of the arts. This group is also developing classroom assessments of the arts, and professional development materials to improve the assessment capabilities of teachers. Support is being provided by the Getty Center for Arts Education.

♦ Comprehensive Assessment Systems for IASA Title I/ Goals 2000: This group is developing assessment and evaluation designs for state IASA Title I and Goals 2000 planning purposes. One study group is developing a schema for classifying available assessments for use in Title I evaluation; another is developing designs for coordinated state/local assessments; a third is writing an issues paper about classifying the "adequate yearly progress" of schools.

♦ Reading/Writing Literacy Standards and Assessment Consortium: This group develops models for assessing student literacy and sharing existing literacy measures.

♦ Assessing Special Education Students: This group develops procedures for accommodating special education students in statewide assessments. Study groups examine definitions of eligible students, provide parents with information about the rationale for inclusion in large-scale assessments, demonstrate the effectiveness of special education programs, and develop alternative assessments for students still unable to participate in large-scale assessment programs.

♦ Technical Guidelines for Performance Assessment: This group is sponsoring, with OERI support, research on the use of performance assessments in state assessment programs. Leading researchers are conducting research on state programs, conducting professional development seminars for state staffs, and developing a manual on the use of performance assessment at the state level.

(see SCASS, page 12)

SCASS assessment consortia develop state assessment models

♦ Workplace Readiness Assessment Consortium: The group has developed a consensus framework for work readiness, and is developing performance measures of generic work readiness skills such as teamwork, written communications, and oral communications. The group has also served as a focal point of discussion of assessment strategies such as CIM/CAM.

The second type of activity is development projects, in which states work together to develop assessment standards. States are invited to join one or more of the projects which will develop standards and student assessments. These projects will be linked to emerging national standards. Currently several projects are underway:

States are invited to join one or more of the projects which will develop standards and student assessments. These projects will be linked to emerging national standards.

♦ The Health Education Assessment Project has developed hundreds of performance tasks, events, open-ended and selected-response exercises, and a portfolio assessment model to measure this area. Member states will have sufficient assessment resources to conduct assessment at state and/or local levels. Professional development materials are also being developed.

♦ The Assessing Limited-English Proficient Students project develops procedures and materials for more appropriate assessment of English language learning students, including research on effective programs, language proficiency measures, and measures of academic achievement.

♦ The Primary-Level Assessment System develops a K-3 portfolio assessment model for use in place of conventional tests and suitable for Title I evaluation purposes.

♦ The Science Education Assessment Project has developed hundreds of performance tasks, events, open-ended and selected-response exercises, and a portfolio assessment model to measure this area. Member states will have sufficient assessment resources to conduct assessment at state and/or local levels.

♦ The Social Studies Project is developing disciplinary (civics, geography, and history) and cross-disciplinary (social studies) assessments suitable for large-scale assessment.

Over forty states are participating in one or more of the activities. In each project, states initially plan the development work and then work together to carry it out. States may join the projects at any time. Funding for SCASS activities is being provided by participating states, foundations, and other sources.

The work of the SCASS project on Assessing Special Education Students is proceeding with direction from the National Center for Educational Outcomes, CCSSO, and the National Association of State Directors of Special Education. The Council hopes to facilitate the work of states; and to develop procedures for accommodating students with disabilities, criteria for determining when to offer such accommodations, procedures to monitor the use of these accommodations, and mechanisms for reporting results.

The group sees the need to develop materials that can be used to demonstrate accommodations. The group hopes to develop alternative assessment procedures such as portfolios that can be used when accommodations are not appropriate.

States that are interested in learning more about this project, or in becoming members, are urged to contact Ed Roeber, Director, Student Assessment Programs, CCSSO, at 517-347-1145 or at edroeber@aol.com.

Council for Exceptional Children establishes standards for accreditation and certification

Margie Cruichfield
Council for Exceptional Children

The Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) has developed and adopted standards for certification and for preparation of special education teachers. The certification standards, which define what beginning special educators must know to teach, includes CEC's Common Core of Knowledge and Skills, as well as specific knowledge and skills content for different areas of specialization.

The speciality areas include deaf and hard of hearing, early childhood, emotional/behavioral disorders, gifted and talented, learning disabilities, mental retardation/developmental disabilities, physical and health disabilities, and visually impaired. Standards are being developed for paraeducators and special education administrators, educational diagnosticians, career/transition specialists, and technology specialists.

To be qualified to practice as a new special educator under CEC's standards, an individual must have completed at least a bachelor's degree, have mastery of the competencies set forth in CEC's Common Core of Knowledge and Skills essential for all beginning special education teachers, *and* mastery of the competencies set forth in at least one area of the CEC specialization knowledge and skills essential for beginning special education teachers. To renew certification, a special education professional must have successfully completed at least a 1-year mentorship and 25 clock hours of planned, pre-approved, organized, and recognized professional development activities related to his or her practice.

CEC's Guidelines for Special Education Professional Preparation Programs, which parallel CEC's Knowledge and Skills standards, have been approved by the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE).

As a result, the 40 states that now have partnerships with NCATE will have to align their state standard for accreditation with CEC's. By including CEC's Knowledge and Skills standards within the CEC/NCATE standards for accreditation, CEC has merged certification standards with accreditation standards and set the stage for special education teachers graduating from CEC/NCATE approved institutions to teach throughout the United States and Canada.

The specialty areas include deaf and hard of hearing, early childhood, emotional/behavioral disorders, gifted and talented, learning disabilities, mental retardation/developmental disabilities, physical and health disabilities, and visually impaired.

For further information on the CEC standards, the accreditation process, or related assistance, contact CEC's Professional Standards and Practices Unit at 703/264-9408 or cec.pro@cec.sped.org. The Common Core of Knowledge and Skills are posted on CEC's Web Page, http://cec.sped.org. Click on Professional Standards.

CEC's standards have been published in a book titled *What Every Special Educator Must Know: The International Standards for the Preparation and Certification of Special Education Teachers*. For information on ordering this publication contact CEC Publications, 1-800-232-7323.

Mid-South Regional Resource Center: recent activities related to standards and assessment

Ken Olsen, Ed.D.
Director
Mid-South RRC

The Mid-South RRC is again collaborating with the National Center on Educational Outcomes (Jim Yesseldyke and Martha Thurlow) to produce resource materials on inclusive large scale assessment. A "Policy Directions" brief was published in Fall 1996 on alternate assessments for students who cannot take regular statewide assessments even with accommodations.

A second paper, entitled "Issues and Considerations in Alternate Assessment," describes thirteen issues that must be addressed in developing an alternate assessment system. This paper was recently published. A third paper will provide suggestions on how to develop and install an alternate assessment system that can ensure accountability for all students.

On February 4, 1997, the Mid-South RRC convened a task force of seven teachers of students with severe cognitive disabilities to help generate alternate options for assessing, on a large scale basis, what such students know and can do. The teachers were selected from five states (DE, KY, MD, NC, and VA) that have asked the RRC for specific assistance with alternate assessments. The results will be integrated in the NCEO "how to" document.

Further plans include feasibility checks with state assessment and special education personnel and use as a resource in agreements with Deleware, North Carolina and Virginia.

In addition, the MSRRC is working with Kentucky, Virginia, and South Carolina to help ensure that the IEPs of students with disabilities will reflect the high state standards while ensuring the availability of specially designed instruction needed to address the state curricula. Thus far, the efforts involve providing guidelines for curriculum development and analysis and working with policy and advisory groups to establish clearly inclusive directions for the states.

Please update your Internet bookmarks to include the following new web site addresses:

Federal Resource Center for Special Education
http://www.dssc.org/frc/

National Information Center for Children and Youth with Disabilities
http://www.nichcy.org/

Technical Assistance Center for Professional Development Partnership Projects
http://www.dssc.org/pdp/

National Transition Alliance
http://www.dssc.org/nta/

Upcoming conferences

♦ ***Council for Exceptional Children's Annual Convention***
Salt Lake City, UT
April 9-13, 1997
Contact: Council for Exceptional Children
1920 Association Drive
Reston VA 20191-1589
Voice: 703-620-3660
Email: cec@cec.sped.org

♦ ***Fifth Annual Conference on Comprehensive System of Personnel Development***
April 30 - May 3, 1997
Crystal City Marriott
Arlington, VA
Contact: Lin Ballard
Voice: 703-519-3800
Email: lin@nasdse.org

The U.S. Department of Education's 1997 Regional Conferences on Improving America's Schools

Please attend one of the IAS Conferences in:

San Diego, CA
Thursday, October 16 -
Saturday, October 18
Town and Country Resort
& Convention Center
500 Hotel Circle North
San Diego, CA
(619) 291-7131

If you live in the following states: Alaska, California, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, Oregon, Washington, Wyoming, American Samoa, Federated States of Micronesia, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, Guam, Republic of the Marshall Islands, and the Republic of Palau.

Dallas, TX
Sunday, November 16 -
Tuesday, November 18
Hyatt Regency Reunion
300 Reunion Blvd.
Dallas, TX
(214) 651-4498

If you live in the following states: Arizona, Colorado, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, Nevada, New Mexico, North Dakota, Oklahoma, South Dakota, Texas, Utah, and Wisconsin.

Washington, DC
Sunday December 14 -
Tuesday, December 16
Sheraton Washington Hotel
2660 Woodley Road at
Connecticut Avenue, NW
Washington, DC
(202) 328-2000

If you live in the following states: Alabama, Arkansas, Connecticut, Delaware, District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Mississippi, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Puerto Rico, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Tennessee, Vermont, Virginia, West Virginia, and the Virgin Islands.

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This newsletter was arranged by Megan Ogilvie. Please send comments regarding this newsletter to the Federal Resource Center for Special Education, at frc@aed.org.

The Academy for Educational Development, founded in 1961, is an independent, not-for-profit service organization committed to addressing human development needs in the United States and throughout the world. In partnership with its clients, the Academy seeks to meet today's social, economic, and environmental challenges through education and human resource development; to apply state-of-the-art education, training, research, technology, management, behavioral analysis, and social marketing techniques to solve problems; and to improve knowledge and skills throughout the world as the most effective means for stimulating growth, reducing poverty, and promoting democratic and humanitarian ideals.

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Regional Resource and Federal Centers

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http://www.educ.drake.edu/rc/RRC/mprrc.html

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